

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

September 2020

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *The New Small Person*

(Lauren Child)

Life as an only child is going well for Elmore, until a new little person comes along to interrupt his TV shows and knock over his toys.



But as his brother gets older, Elmore realizes that a sibling can become a friend—maybe even enough of one to share his prized jelly beans with.

■ *The Word Collector* (Sonja Wimmer)

Luna loves to collect magnificent words, but one day she notices words disappearing from her collection. Soon she discovers that they're missing because people are too busy to remember them. Can Luna bring love, friendship, and fun back into their lives through the power of words? (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Even Superheroes Have Bad Days*

(Shelly Becker)

Superheroes could use their powers to do naughty things, like change the weather or cause chaos when they are sad or mad—but do they? Readers will find out how even the mightiest superheroes work through their emotions to make a difference in the world.



■ *How Did That Get in My Lunchbox? The Story of Food*

(Chris Butterworth)

Where do common foods like bread, cheese, and carrots come from? This nonfiction book describes their journeys from farm to lunchbox.

Your child will discover that it takes a lot of work to grow and produce yummy foods.



Adventures in reading

What's between the pages of a book? An adventure that your youngster could go on—without leaving home! These ideas will show him all that he can learn on his nonfiction reading expeditions.



Take an animal safari

Together, look for animals outside, and help your child make a list of the ones you see. Then, read books or look online to learn facts about each one. What does it eat? What are its babies called? Does it sleep at night or during the day? Encourage your youngster to write each fact (or dictate it to you) in a notebook to carry on future walks. How many new animals can he “meet”?

Meet people

Scientists, artists, civil rights leaders ... biographies are full of fascinating people. Suggest that your youngster make a trading card for each person he reads about. He could write facts like the person's name, birthplace, and accomplishments. Or he might write a letter (real

or pretend) to the person that includes questions he has.

Visit new places

Let your child plan an imaginary trip to a book's setting. After a story about a rain forest, read a nonfiction book on jungles. He can use facts he learns to make a packing list for his journey. He'll have to think about the climate (hot, rainy) to decide what he needs (wide-brimmed hat, lots of water, umbrella). He could also write a pretend postcard from his destination. ♥

Fine-motor fun

Playing with tiny objects strengthens little hands—building the fine-motor skills your child needs for handwriting, drawing, and more. Try these activities.

- **Cotton-ball race.** Give each player an empty bowl and a bowl containing 12 cotton balls or other small, soft items. Using tweezers or your thumb and forefinger, race each other to transfer them—one at a time—to the empty bowl. Who will win the race?
- **Yarn wrapping.** Let your youngster use safety scissors to cut long pieces of colorful yarn. Then, have her tape one end of each to the outside of a cup, wrap the yarn around and around, and tape down the opposite end. *Idea:* She could use her creation as a pencil or crayon holder. ♥



Ready, set, write!

Drawing is the first way children express their thoughts on paper. You may also have noticed—or will soon notice—your youngster writing scribbles, letters, or words on her pictures. Use these strategies to support your little writer at every stage.

Drawings. Invite your child to tell you all about pictures she draws. Ask questions that encourage her to tell a



story: “Who is in your drawing?” “What are their names?” *Tip:* As your youngster learns to write her name in school, have her start printing it on pictures she draws at home.

Scribbles. Is your child adding scribbles or letter-like shapes to her pictures? Combining drawing and writing is a big step toward learning to write. Acknowledge her efforts by asking, “Can you read that to me?”

Writing. When your youngster begins writing actual letters or words, help her list words she uses frequently. *Examples:* *the, like, Mommy, Daddy.* She can label her list “Words I Know”—and refer to it to help her write captions for her pictures.♥

Q&A Reading aloud—together



Q My son loves when I read to him. Any tips for using story time to help him learn to read himself?

A Sure! Start by asking your child to join in when you read. Try reading a book with a refrain, perhaps *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle) or *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (Laura Numeroff). After a few pages, pause before the repeating part—your son will feel proud to finish the page himself (“But he was still hungry!”).



Your child will also learn from listening to you read rhyming books. Stop before you say each rhyming word to let your youngster fill it in.

Finally, develop his reading comprehension by talking about stories. Share your reactions (“That part really cracked me up!”), and listen while he tells you his response.♥

Fun with Words

Plant an alphabet tree

Read an alphabet book with your child, then encourage him to build his own alphabet tree to identify and remember letters.



1. Let your youngster plant a “tree trunk” (an empty cardboard paper-towel tube) in a cup filled with dirt or sand. Then, help him cut small slits into the trunk and insert craft stick “branches.”
2. Have your child draw 26 “alphabet leaves” on green paper, cut them out, and write a letter on each leaf. *Tip:* He could flip through the alphabet book to remind himself what each letter looks like.
3. Together, recite the alphabet (or sing the alphabet song) while he tapes each leaf to any branch.
4. Read the book again—can your child find each letter on his tree?♥

Parent to Parent

Family show-and-tell

When my daughter Erica began kindergarten, she was hesitant to speak up during show-and-tell. Her teacher suggested that we practice at home, so we decided to hold a weekly family show-and-tell night.

Every Friday, we gather in the living room and take turns sharing something that’s important to us. Each person explains why her show-and-tell item is special. Then we

ask questions, such as, “What do you like best about it?” or “Where did you get it?” We’ve shared books, drawings, souvenirs, and more.

What began as a way to help Erica practice speaking has turned out to be a great family conversation starter. Now Erica is in second grade—she’s speaking up more in class, and we still look forward to family show-and-tell each week.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children’s reading, writing, and language skills.

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Read-aloud favorites

■ *Doggy Defenders: Willow the Therapy Dog* (Lisa M. Gerry)

Some dogs have incredible jobs helping people, and Willow is one of them. This nonfiction book follows a therapy dog named Willow through her day at work. She spreads cheer in a hospital and a retired veterans' home, and she even "reads" with children at a library. Part of the Doggy Defenders series.



■ *Hair Like Mine*

(LaTashia M. Perry)

A little girl thinks her hair is too curly and frizzy, and she struggles to find someone with hair like hers. With guidance from her mother, who insists that no two people have the same hair, face, or toes, the girl learns about the value of differences.

■ *The One Day House*

(Julia Durango)

This is the heart-warming story of a young boy named Wilson and his older neighbor, Gigi. When Gigi's house desperately needs repairs, Wilson wants to make it nicer for her. Thanks to caring friends and neighbors, he gets his wish faster than he imagined. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Ronan the Librarian*

(Tara Luebbe and Becky Cattie)

No legendary barbarian wants to read a book ... right? That's what Ronan the Barbarian thinks until he finds a book in his raided treasure. He loves the book so much that he teaches his fellow barbarians to enjoy reading, too.



Make time for reading

Any time is a great time for your child to read! Here's how to fit more reading into busy days.

Check the weather

Invite your youngster to be the family weather reporter. Each evening, she can read tomorrow's forecast in the newspaper or on your phone's weather app. Encourage her to use weather symbols, such as raindrops or suns, if she needs a little help figuring out the words. Soon she'll recognize words like *rainy* and *sunny* right away.



math practice, she could read the numbers and fractions in the recipe, too.

Explore recipes

When you cook, let your child read the recipe with you. Make it easier by having her get out the ingredients. Hearing you say potatoes or cheese, finding the item, and maybe seeing the word on the package will help her as she sounds out the words in the recipe. *Tip:* For

Listen to audiobooks

While you're working from home or running errands, your youngster can enjoy books independently. Download audiobooks and check out print versions of the same books from the library. She can follow along with the story as she turns the pages and perhaps learn to recognize new words. ♥

Write to keep in touch

"Will you be my pen pal?" With this idea, your youngster can write friendly letters and stay close to loved ones.

Together, ask a relative to be your child's pen pal. Explain that your youngster is learning to write—and they can help! Then, let your child pick out stationery or search online for "free stationery printables kids."

Now help your youngster write a greeting ("Dear Aunt Lori"). Underneath, he could write about or draw pictures of activities he's been doing, like roller skating or caring for his new kitten. He should also ask his pen pal questions. ("How is your job?") When your relative writes back, you and your child can read the letter—and write a reply. ♥



What sounds do you hear?

Sounds and syllables are like the nuts and bolts of words. Call your youngster's attention to word parts with these activities that will help him grow into a strong reader.

Swap the sound. With your youngster, think of a word family, or a group of words with the same "last name" (for example, *-all*). Now take turns saying a word with that ending (*fall, wall*). If you say a nonsense word (*zall*), ask your child to make up a silly definition. "Zall: A black-and-white striped ball that zebras play with!"



Blend the consonants. Have your youngster put these letter tiles or magnetic letters into a bag: B, C, E, G, H, L, P, R, S, T, and W. He can pull out two letters (perhaps S and P), then help him try to blend them and say a word that includes the blended sound (*spider*). If the sounds can't be blended, like B and T, he should put them back and pull out new letters.

Subtract a syllable. Say a familiar word that has more than one syllable, such as *pumpkin* or *television*. Now encourage your youngster to take away one or more of the syllables: "If you take *pump* out of *pumpkin*, what do you have left?" (Answer: *kin*.) What happens if he "subtracts" vision from *television*? (He'll have *tele*.)♥

Fun with Words

Sensational writing tools

Put down your pencils! Your child can practice forming letters and words with these fun-to-touch materials.

Sugar

Let your youngster spread a thin layer of sugar on a baking sheet. Then, she could write each letter of the alphabet with her finger.



Paint

Have your child dip her finger in paint and write on construction paper. She might write the color word that matches each color of paint she uses, like yellow for yellow paint.

Soil

Your youngster will get fresh air and enjoy nature by writing outside. Help her find a stick and a patch of soil. She could etch words in the dirt, perhaps to list things she sees outdoors (*birds, clouds*).♥



Q&A

Don't forget the spaces!

Q When my daughter writes, a whole sentence sometimes looks like one long word. How can I get her to put spaces between words?

A Ask her to read her writing out loud so she can "hear" the spaces. As she reads, have her draw a vertical line where she thinks each space should be.

You can also show her spaces in books. Pick a sentence, and ask her to count the words. She'll need to pay attention to the spaces to figure out how many words there are.

Finally, encourage her to use her finger as a "space bar" by laying it on her paper after she writes each word. It will show her how much space to leave before she begins the next word. Or let her decorate a craft stick with stickers and use that as a space bar.♥



Parent to Parent

Play library—at home

My son Elijah and I missed our weekly visits when the pandemic closed down our library. So he came up with the idea to play library at home, which has given us a nice way to talk about books.

First, Elijah made library cards for all of us. To play, we place books around our living room and use the coffee table as the checkout counter. Sometimes Elijah is the librarian. He recommends

books for me, "scans" them at the checkout, and leads story hour. Other times, we trade roles. After we finish playing, we put the books back on the shelf in alphabetical order, just like real librarians do.

We're enjoying library time even when we're not at the actual library, and Elijah is learning to think critically about books to give good recommendations.♥



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